

# A LETTER

To His GRACE the

*R*  
Arch-Bishop of Canterbury,  
*Dr John Potter.*

FROM A

MEMBER of CONVOCATION.



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L E T T E R

To His GRACE the

Arch-Bishop of *Canterbury*.

**A**S the Eminency of your Grace's  
Station awes and keeps us  
at a distance, so the many  
excellent Qualities which have rais'd  
you to it, that consummate Know-  
ledge of Men and Things, that pro-  
found Learning and Judgment in your  
own Profession, and above all that  
glowing Zeal for whatever concerns  
B Religion,

Religion ; which, like the Fire in the Temple, is always burning, invite and force us to apply to his Grace of *Canterbury*, whenever the glorious Cause of Christianity needs any Assistance : And your Grace's Goodness is such, that if the Intention be but sincere, you readily pardon the Meanness of the Author, or any Defects in his Manner of Address.

IN confidence of this, my Design was to offer by word of mouth, to your Grace, and our Ecclesiastical Synod, at its first Meeting to choose a Prolocutor, what I have here written ; and being by Sickness at that time prevented, I hoped I should have an Opportunity of doing it, or at least that some Member of that Learned Body, of greater Abilities, would have



have engaged in a Subject, which only could render our Meeting of any Use to the Church, when the Synod was again assembled to present the Prolocutor ; but the same Illness kept me from attending, and no body else thought fit to meddle with it : My Expectation was still buoy'd up with the Prospect of seeing it, in the fullest Manner, and to the utmost Advantage represented, in what I imagined gave the best Opportunity of doing it, *viz.* the Address of both Houses presented to the King ; whose most glorious and most shining Title it is to be its Defender, with what Virulency our common Faith is from many Quarters attack'd : But here, alas ! too, I found myself grievously disappointed.—In that loyal and dutiful Address we justly congratulate his most Sacred Majesty,

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jesty, on his Health and Safety, which  
 so necessarily include in them every  
 Blessing we ourselves can hope to en-  
 joy ; nor can we exceed in our Pro-  
 mises of Duty and Affection, to a  
 Prince who is the Head of the Church,  
 as well as the Support of our Coun-  
 try, and takes all Opportunities of  
 giving us the utmost Assurances, of  
 his defending the one, and protecting  
 the other : 'Tis much to be wish'd,  
 that in this Address his Majesty had  
 been acquainted with the sad State of  
 Religion at this time, amongst us ;  
 with the daily Growth of Infidelity,  
 all sorts of Heresies, and a most dis-  
 solute, unrestrain'd Increase of Pro-  
 faneness and Immorality.

For as these Things are a Scandal  
 and Reproach to his Government, so  
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if they are not timely remedied, 'tis justly to be fear'd, they will draw down the Divine Vengeance on himself and his People.—We are the Watchmen, and by virtue of that Trust, are to be continually on our guard, looking out, and upon the first Appearance of Danger, must alarm those under whose Defence we expect our Safety.

HIS Majesty is by no means justly dealt withal, if he is not fully appris'd of the growing Evil ; for he is principally concern'd, and must feel the heavy Inconveniencies which Blasphemy, and an impious Contempt of Things sacred will always bring upon every Government, where they are suffer'd with Impunity to thrive and prosper.—In this Case He bears the  
Sword

Sword in vain, which can never be so fitly used as in the Cause of God and Religion ; but the Reason is, that those whose Duty it is to do it, have not inform'd him against whom to draw it.

I Hope your Grace won't think it too late for something of this kind, in a particular Address to be attempted: And though we should not again be permitted to meet in a Body, a Representation of these intolerable Grievances, with your Grace's Encouragement, might yet be laid before his Majesty in a proper Manner, by a particular Application of each Member of the Representative of the Clergy of your Grace's Province.

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IF we have been brought so low by the Act of Submission, as to lose the Liberty the Parliament still enjoys, and which is essential to the very Being of all Free Societies, we are not certainly reduced to so abject a State of Slavery, as to be depriv'd of the Right we have in common with other Subjects, of applying in an humble and legal Manner to our most Gracious Sovereign, for his Licence to Sit and Act; or debarr'd from all Access to the present Parliament, from whose commendable Zeal for the Good of their Country, we have the greatest Reason to expect all imaginable Encouragement, and a thorough and ready Compliance with our Request to have this heavy Yoke taken off.

LET

LET it be consider'd on what Foot we now stand.—I need not observe to your Grace, that the Convocation is an essential Part of our Constitution ; a manifest Proof of which is, its being constantly call'd with every Parliament : But what End of its convening is answer'd by such a Summons ?

SHOULD we think the Freedom, the many and great Advantages of Parliament were secur'd, if they met once only to choose their Speaker ? Would this provide for the pressing Exigencies, which at other Times, but especially in those of imminent Danger, the Nation may be expos'd to ?

DID we then reflect of how much higher Consequence the Affairs of  
Religion

Religion are, than such as regard the State only, certainly, when Infidelity is openly abetted, when the vilest Heresy is publicly defended, when the Axe is laid to the very Root of the Christian Institution, the Lord who bought us actually deny'd, and his Doctrine become the Object of Scorn and Ridicule ; those whose proper Business it is to redress these horrid Enormities, to censure and correct these monstrous Impieties, the Clergy, ought frequently to meet, and consult the best Methods for effecting it. Can any Society subsist, unless its Members often come together, enact Laws, and concert the most effectual Means for its Preservation ? Don't we see this constantly done, by every Company and petty Corporation, by all our Secretaries of every Denomination ? And

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is the National Eſtabliſhed Church alone denied this Privilege? A Privilege which not only the Dictates of Nature make neceſſary, but in our Caſe the Laws of God and Man have with great Wiſdom provided for.— The Favourers of the preſent unhappy Situation of the National Synod would inſinuate, that if 'twas to fit for diſpatch of Buſineſs, Heats and Animoſities of the utmoſt diſſervice to Religion might probably ariſe : But is this any Reaſon for diſcontinuing Parliaments? Don't they meet on purpoſe to argue and diſcuſs Matters of the higheſt, the laſt Importance? Or does Religion alone diſqualify Men from entering coolly into Debates, from keeping their Tempers in Controverſial Points? Are Spiritual Perſons only unfit to be truſted with them-



themselves ? — However indifferent others may be, (and certainly so much Coldness and Indifferency, as at this time discovers itself, was never seen in any Christian Age or Country before) 'tis the indispenfible Duty of the Clergy to contend earnestly for each Article of our Creed ; they are its Stewards, and are requir'd to be faithful. — Let no private Views, no Fear of giving Offence to the High and Powerful, not the Respect to any Man's Person, make us betray our Trust.

I DON'T remember that any, even the least Publick Notice has been taken of this one thing needful. We have never, in a Body, apply'd to our most Gracious Sovereign on this most arduous, this momentous Subject ; tho'

I am well assur'd, His Majesty needs only to be duly appriz'd of the uncommon Insults offer'd to Religion, to call him out in the most strenuous manner, arm'd with all that Authority, which could never be lodg'd in better hands, to vindicate the Honour of Almighty God, thus grossly, and hitherto with Impunity assaulted.—

'Tis to a supine Negligence, (to say nothing worse) in this Particular, we owe our present Misfortunes, that Contempt which is every where pour'd out upon us abroad, and our wretched Miseries and Distractions at home.—Those only who honour God shall be sensible of the Divine Favour, shall be honour'd by him ; nor do any Effects flow more naturally from their Causes than Poverty and Divisions, all sorts of Calamities, from Prophaneness and Immorality.

Immorality.——We need not go so far back as the *Jewish*, or other Histories, we are ourselves a most deplorable Instance of this Truth; God is with us whilst we are with him, but when we forsake him, He most assuredly leaves us.——Your Grace must remember in how extraordinary a manner, an Interruption was given to the Business, and, as the Consequence has since prov'd, to the very Being of Convocations, in this Kingdom many Years since.——And I hope 'twill never be forgotten with what Learning, what Courage, what truly Primitive and Apostolical Zeal, your Grace and the most excellent Bishops of *London* and *Salisbury* then engag'd in defence of its Orders and Discipline, by that Adversary of our Church, that Viper nourish'd and brought

brought up within its own Breast, so virulently assaulted : Which, if any thing could have done it, must have overwhelm'd with Shame and Conviction so sophistical, so profligate a Writer.——'Twas to screen this Monster, this bold and impious Offender, from that Censure and Correction his Crimes so loudly call'd for, that the Body Representative of the Church of *England* receiv'd this mortal Wound ; and what follow'd so surprizing, so unprecedented a Step in his favour, was such as all People of common Sense foresaw it would be, only an Incouragement to him, to run still greater lengths in his impudent Treatment of the most Sacred Things and Persons : And from pouring Contempt on the Orders and Discipline of the Church, he has lately proceeded to vilify



vilify and depreciate its most Holy Sacrament : Which low, but blasphemous Performance, tho' it has, with the utmost Strength of Reason and Argument, been confuted, in a manner even by himself deem'd unanswerable, has neither made the abandon'd Author, with a Sense of Ingenuity, confess, and retract his Error, nor with his Brother *Judas*, yet discover such a Degree of Modesty and Repentance, as to oblige him to withdraw and hang himself.—I need not take Notice, that Synods and Councils Ecclesiastical, have equally at least, with other Societies, a natural Right to assemble, that they have ever been call'd and held for the settling Religious Affairs, even when the Civil Magistrate was not a Christian, and either interfer'd not at all, or would have

have hinder'd such Meetings. By them Controverted Points have been adjusted, Differences reconcil'd, Heresies suppress'd, and the Peace and Unity of the Church preserv'd.—Nor have we any Account of this Method's being so long interrupted as of late Years, the sad Effects of which we now most severely groan under.—The Primitive Christians so well knew the terrible Consequences of its dis-use, that they chose rather to expose themselves to all sorts of Dangers and Persecutions, than part with this Custom, or not assemble themselves together after this Manner: And shall we tamely drop this most invaluable Privilege, which the Laws of God and those of our Country, have both confirm'd to us, without so much as moving one Foot in its defence?

I SHALL conclude with an humble and most earnest Request to your Grace, who is truly sensible to what a deplorable and calamitous State our Party Differences have reduc'd us, to endeavour that the first Step (for I hear of no Advances that way, which have yet been made) to the healing these sad Divisions, under your Grace's Influence and Example, be most heartily set forward by the Clergy.—

A Kingdom divided must soon be brought to Desolation. Remember that Infinite Wisdom, Unerring Truth itself has told us, where Strife and Envy are, *there is*, do you observe? 'tis not said, *may*, or *will be*, but there is Confusion. Immediaely on the Parties being form'd, the Effects appear,

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pear, run parallel with, and are continued 'till the Cause is remov'd.

AMONGST many, I will mention one Instance only at this time, in which this Confusion shews itself; *viz.* in blending and confounding all Distinctions, and taking away the very Difference between Good and Evil. In this Case nothing is consider'd but Party: Men's Morality, Learning, or Religion not once ask'd for, but their Political Character only regarded: And as they always merit most, who do their Friends the greatest Service; so are no Persons more care'd than such as influence Elections for Parliament: here to bribe and corrupt, to hire and suborn Voters to perjure themselves, and Sheriffs, &c. to make false Returns, bespeaks distinguish'd Worth; and those who engage in it, shine



shine with inexpressible Lustre: And instead of subjecting the Villains who are guilty of it, to such Punishments as the most black and flagitious Crimes call for, this diabolical Conduct is a sure Passport, and opens the way for them to the most conspicuous Posts, either Civil or Military. And oh! tell it not in *Gorb*! thro' this dirty and polluted Channel, say the Wicked, flow the highest Dignities and Preferments in the Church.

BUT what serious Temper, what virtuous Mind is not transported with the utmost Indignation and Resentment, when it reflects on the Confusions, and all the evil Works of Strife and Envy? One would imagine, and generally so it happens, that none but the vilest, the lowest Class of Men-

kind should take pains to distinguish themselves in this Particular. Hither the Quakers, the Presbyterians, the Dissenters of every Denomination, the Deists, the Arians and Infidels, all who make themselves obnoxious to the Laws of their Country, fly together as to a common Asylum, and cover their several Enormities under the Shelter of the most powerful and prevailing Interest. To this Refuge the Immoral, the Ignorant and Undeserving betake themselves for Protection, and are never disappointed. Those who have no other Qualifications, but an impudent Face, and a Case-harden'd Conscience, here meet with the kindest Reception: Here they are sure all Distinction ceases; no Abilities, Qualities, or Endowments are wanting to make them capable of  
any

any Station, Post, or Employment their Views direct them to.———This  
 fits Novices, such as are scarce enter'd into the Function, for those Dignities and Preferments which the generous Charity, and pious Bounty of Founders and Benefactors have, with great solemnity, and by fixing the most dreadful Curses and Anathema's on those who shall presume to pervert their prudent Designs, provided for the aged and laborious Ministers of *Christ* : For such as have thro' a Course of many Years ruled well ; such as in pursuance of the great Charge committed unto them, have long labour'd in the Word and Doctrine. All-powerful Party breaks thro' the Laws of Reason, Decency, and Religion at once ; and by Partiality prefers the Younger to those Stations  
 which

which the Grave and Aged alone are entitled to.

I MUST just observe how vile a Part they act, who pretend to interfere in Elections, which ought to be always free: And what consummate Villains they are who are thus influenc'd? The Privilege of Voting for our Representatives in Parliament, and a most valuable Privilege it is, if rightly used, is lodg'd in our hands by the Laws and Customs of our Country, for the most noble Purposes; and what a Wretch, what a Betrayer of this great Trust is the Man who thinks himself at liberty to make a Compliment of his Vote, to a powerful Friend, or in other Words, is brib'd by a Promise, &c. and has a View in giving it to some private Interest and Advantage



Advantage only? Which, as the Law now stands, is never done without the Guilt of Perjury. How false is this Villain to that Confidence the Publick has reposed in him? I beg to add a Word or two further to expose the Guilt and Malignity of those who seduce, or rather suborn these mercenary Tools, by their Promises of doing it first, and then by actually bestowing their Favours on them. To distinguish Men whom we know to be so very wicked, and have been accessary to the making their Characters so consummately black and odious, by particular Marks of our Pavour and Friendship, heaping on them all our Kindness and Civilities, who are themselves a Scandal and Reproach to the human Species, must bring the heaviest Disgrace and Imputation on

us their Benefactors. To promote one of these Advocates of our Cause, whom we are sure is so notoriously abandon'd as to blaspheme the Name of God by false Swearing, for we are very well satisfy'd the Reward or Gratitude promis'd or receiv'd from our Hands, was the only Motive of his acting; in this Case there is something so exceedingly impious and criminal, that the very worst and lowest Part of Mankind, one would think, should tremble and shudder, when he is going to engage in so horrid an Enterprize. And yet, alas! we have this every day practis'd, by Men who wear honourable Titles, and are such as the World calls Gentlemen.——Nor is there one Example amongst those our Histories furnish us with, of a King of *England's* being by his Subjects depos'd,

pos'd, in which we don't find it a most aggravating and unpardonable Article, that he has by undue Means, either by Force, or Fraud and Bribery, attempted to procure Members of Parliament to be illegally and unduly chosen : This is a Practice which at once dissolves the whole Frame of the *British* Constitution, and is a most flagrant Instance of that dreadful Confusion which Strife and Envy never fail to bring with them ; and is itself so very evil a Work, that it has, without any other Assistance, singly, ruin'd the most flourishing States and Kingdoms where it gets but the least footing, and their Inhabitants are so very weak and impolitic, as to act under its accursed Influences. — Since then these infamous and most fatal ones are the never-failing Consequences of Civil Ani-



mosities and publick Divisions :—  
 If there be any Consolation in *Christ*,  
 if any Fellowship of the Spirit, if any  
 Bowels and Mercy, if any Regard to  
 our most pure and holy Religion, if  
 any Concern for our Country, if any  
 Duty and Affection for our most  
 Gracious Sovereign and his Royal Fa-  
 mily, if the Enjoyment of Ease and  
 Happiness under his present Majesty's  
 most auspicious Government, or the  
 sure Dependency of transmitting all  
 sorts of Felicity thro' the Hands of  
 his numerous Royal Issue, to our  
 latest Posterity ; if these things carry  
 any Weight with them, if they are  
 of the most inestimable Value, if they  
 are capable of inviting or alluring  
 rational Beings, let us be at peace  
 amongst our selves and with all Men.  
 ———Lastly, if the fearful Expecta-  
 tion of the most consummate de-  
 plorable



plorable Miseries ; if the very Sense and Sufferance of our present State of Uneasiness and Disquietude ; if these Considerations singly can affright and terrify us, let them thus united prevail with all Orders and Degrees of Men, but more especially the Clergy, immediately to cease from Strife and Debate, to let go Contention before it be any further meddled with, to labour for Peace, and study to be quiet.—Let us seriously reflect to how dangerous a Crisis our Party-Differences have already brought us ; and oh dismal Prospect ! what inevitable Destruction must soon, very soon conclude this black and horrid Tragedy.—As ever then we expect to see this our native Country freed from its most heavy Calamities ; as ever we desire Rest and Comfort here,

or

or hope to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven hereafter; let us this Moment cease from all Hatred and Discord, and engage in the most resolv'd, and most eager and intense Pursuit of Peace.

YOUR Grace will pardon a Person in a low Station, for meddling with a Subject of the utmost Importance; because, as he is intrusted by those he represents, and their Rights and Privileges are put into his Hands, so he thinks himself laid under the strictest Obligations faithfully to discharge that Trust. *Liberavi Animam meam.*

7. JUNE

I am,

*My most Honoured Lord,*

*Your Grace's most dutiful,*

*and most obedient humble Servant.*